

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-09

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USIA-06 IO-10 SAB-01 SAM-01 /067 W

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R 060946Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1130

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 3186

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, SA, IZ, SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN-IRAQI RELATIONS; EUPHRATES WATERS

REF : JIDDA 3125

SUMMARY: SAUDI PRESS MAY 4 CARRIES REPORTS THAT NO AGREEMENT WAS REACHED DURING THE MEETINGS ON EUPHRATES WATERS MEDIATED BY SAUDI OIL MINISTER YAMANI. SAUDI FONOFF DIRECTOR OF ARAB AFFAIRS HAS TOLD US THAT THE TALKS DIDN'T GET FAR AND SAYS THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO UNLESS THE POLITICAL TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO BAATH REGIMES EASES. AMBASSADOR SAW YAMANI BRIEFLY EVENING MAY 5 AND HE CONFIRMED TALKS NOT GOING WELL BECAUSE OF POLITICAL RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO REGIMES. HE ALSO CONFIRMED OUR SPECULATION (REFTEL) THAT THE JOB OF MEDIATOR CAN BE EXPENSIVE. THE IRAQIS ASKED FOR \$800 MILLION. THE SAUDIS WILL PROVIDE THEM \$200 MILLION. END SUMMARY.

1. SAUDI PRESS MAY 4 CARRIED A STATEMENT BY THE IRAQI
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MINISTER OF IRRIGATION IN WHICH HE EFFECTIVELY DENIED

THE MORE OPTIMISTIC STATEMENT ASCRIBED TO HIM IN THE PRESS THE PREVIOUS DAY. HE IS REPORTED AS DENYING THAT ANY AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THE BASIS OF AN EQUAL DIVISION OF THE EUPHRATES WATERS AND ADDING THAT IRAQ WOULD NEVER AGREE TO A DIVISION OF THE WATERS ON THAT BASIS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD CONTINUE ITS MEDIATION EFFORT.

2. MAY 4 PRESS ALSO CARRIED A STATEMENT BY THE THREE MINISTERS COMMITTEE (I.E. YAMANI, TALBANI AND KAHHALA) WHICH SEEMS TO REFLECT THE ACTUAL STATE OF AFFAIRS:

"THE COMMITTEE HAS STUDIED THE CAUSES OF DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO SISTER COUNTRIES, SYRIA AND IRAQ, WITH REGARD TO DIVISING THE WATERS OF RIVER EUPHRATES AND IT HAS ALSO STUDIED THE VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS AND THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE DIVIDING OF WATER MIGHT BE BASED. IT HAS DECIDED THAT EACH MINISTER WOULD GO BACK TO HIS GOVERNMENT TO STUDY THE OTHER GOVERNMENT'S VIEWPOINTS AS A PREPARATORY STEP TOWARDS HOLDING ANOTHER MEETING AFTER THE VIEWPOINTS OF BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN DEFINED AND CLARIFIED."

3. ON MAY 5 THE DIRECTOR OF ARAB AFFAIRS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AMBASSADOR AL QADI, CONFIRMED TO US THAT NO AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED. (HIS ACCOUNT IS PROBABLY SECOND HAND BUT GENERALLY RELIABLE.) HE SAID THAT THERE MAY BE A GENUINE WATER PROBLEM BUT THAT IT WON'T BE RESOLVED UNTIL THE POLITICAL DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO BAATH REGIMES HAS COOLED. THE SYRIAN RULERS, ACCORDING TO AL QADI, FEEL THAT THE IRAQI REGIME HAS BEEN ACTIVELY WORKING TO OVERTHROW THEM. WHETHER OR NOT THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY RESTRICTING THE FLOW OF WATER TO IRAQ IN REPRISAL, THEY NOW HAVE THEIR HANDS OPENLY ON THE TAP AND ARE LETTING THE IRAQIS KNOW THAT THEIR WATER PROBLEMS CAN GET A LOT WORSE UNLESS THEY BACK OFF POLITICALLY.

4. THE TONE OF THE MEETINGS IN JIDDA WAS APPARENTLY CALM, THOUGH AL QADI SAID THAT THE ACTUAL TALKS ABOUT WATER

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DIDN'T GET VERY FAR. ONE SIDE, FOR INSTANCE, SAID, "YOU KNOW OUR POSITION WHICH WE FORMALLY PRESENTED THREE MONTHS AGO." THE OTHER SIDE REPLIED THAT IT HAD NEVER RECEIVED IT. WHEN THE IRAQI AND SYRIAN MINISTERS RETURNED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS THEY DID AT LEAST KNOW THE LATEST POSITION OF THE OTHER SIDE AS FAR AS EUPHRATES WATERS ARE CONCERNED.

5. THE AMBASSADOR TALKED WITH YAMANI EVENING MAY 5 WHEN YAMANI WAS BRIEFLY IN JIDDA TO REPORT ON HIS MEDIATION EFFORTS. HE SAID THAT THINGS HAD NOT BEEN GOING VERY WELL THOUGH THE WATER PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED WITHOUT MUCH DIFFICULTY. THE REAL PROBLEM IS POLITICAL, THE INTENSE MUTUAL IDEOLOGICAL DISLIKE OF THE TWO BAATHI REGIMES. YAMANI ALSO CONFIRMED OUR SPECULATION IN REFTEL THAT THE JOB OF MEDIATOR CAN BE AN EXPENSIVE ONE. THE IRAQIS HAD ASKED FOR \$800 MILLION. YAMANI SAID THAT CROWN PRINCE FAHD HAD HIMSELF FIELDLED THIS REQUEST AND TAKEN A HARD LINE WITH THE IRAQI EMISSARY SAYING AMONG OTHER THINGS THAT THE IRAQIS HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT THEMSELVES FOR THEIR PRESENT PLIGHT. HE DID, HOWEVER, AGREE TO PROVIDE \$200 MILLION.

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